

## Bio inputs give better yield for brinjal growers in Chittoor, AP

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There is a general view that agriculture is not a remunerative profession. But for those who continue to do farming, there seems to be no choice. Either they leave the fields fallow or sell the lands for quick money. "Reasons for being unremunerative are many like high cost of inputs, inability to break even in profit, marketing etc. But in spite of all these problems there are people like Mr. P. Muniratnam Naidu in Kasturikandriga village, Tirupati Rural Mandal, Chittoor district for whom agriculture is lucrative.

### **New house**

Mr. Muniratnam owns about two acres and in the last two years he has been able to construct a new pucca house from the income he got from his land by growing brinjals (common variety available in the market).

"This is considered big news among many farmers in the region. In fact, after getting to know Muniratnam's details, several farmers started getting into brinjal cultivation. Today an entire street in Muniratnam's locality is named as Brinjal Street," says Dr. K. Gangadharam, General Secretary, Welfare Organisation For Rural Development (Word) an NGO in Tirupathi in Chittoor.

### **Commendable work**

Word has spread among farmers in the district on the need to promote the cause of organic and sustainable agriculture.

"The crop was initially grown in 60 cents which was later extended to an acre. In the remaining one acre, groundnut, onions and some vegetables were grown. The income from brinjal was quite noteworthy for

me. I harvested nearly 12 tonnes in three months earning about Rs. 96,000 as gross income while the net income was Rs. 60,000.

### **Annual income**

"In a year I earned Rs. 2,40,000 from brinjal alone. I make my own inputs after getting trained by Word and hardly spent much protecting the crop against the dreaded fruit borer that affects it," says a smiling Muniratnam.

Presently more than 300 farmers in the region are using the indigenous bio inputs such as jivamrita, agniastra and neem astra, according to Dr. Gangadharam.

"Our organisation has been trained by Mr. Subash Palekar, in zero budget farming and in turn we are teaching our farmers to practise the same," he says.

Jivamrita is a growth enhancer which is used for almost all crops like paddy, vegetables and flowers. It is made by adding 10 kg of desi cow dung and 10 litres of urine dissolved in 200 litres of water. To this two kg of jaggery (or four litres of sugarcane juice) and pulse flour each (any pulse) is added and stirred well.

The solution is kept under a shade for a week to ferment well and then allowed to mix with the running irrigation water. For the fruit borer pest farmers have been trained to use agniastra or neemastra.

### **Agniastra**

Agniastra is made by soaking one kg of crushed tobacco leaves in 10 litres of desi cow urine. To this, 500 grams of chilli and garlic pulp (ground into a paste) each and 5kg of crushed neem leaves are added. This is diluted in 100 litres of water and sprayed.

Neemastra is made by mixing five litres of cow urine, two 2kg of dung and five kgs of crushed neem leaves in 100 litres of water and allowed to ferment for 24 hours. Later after filtering it is diluted in water and sprayed on brinjal to control the pests.

### **Market**

Almost all the brinjal growers either market their produce through a weekly organic outlet managed by Word in Tirupathi or also send the produce to Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad markets.

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